

**The Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS) Program**  
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**Introduction**

Chairman Mollohan, Ranking Member Wolf, and Members of the Subcommittee, I sincerely appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today to discuss the **Regional Information Sharing Systems (RISS) Program**. **RISS** is a national program that consists of six regional intelligence centers that support and serve the unique needs of their individual regions while working together on national-scope issues. RISS is a universal and comprehensive program serving criminal justice agencies through a variety of services. Through the support provided by RISS, law enforcement and public safety agencies have increased their success exponentially. In many cases, these agencies would not be able to maximize their efforts without the support and services offered by RISS. It is because of these resources and trusted relationships that RISS is a program prized and valued by its members and users. Through these successes, as well as remaining needs throughout the criminal justice community, RISS has experienced increased demand for services. Continued and additional funding is needed in order to meet this demand and continue to build a national information sharing environment. **RISS respectfully requests that Congress appropriate \$55 million for FY2010.**

RISS links thousands of criminal justice agencies through secure communications and provides information sharing resources and investigative support to combat multijurisdictional crimes, including terrorism, violent crime, gang activity, drug activity, human trafficking, identity theft, and other regional priorities. RISS strives to enhance the ability of criminal justice agencies to identify, target, and remove criminal conspiracies and activities while promoting officer safety. RISS operates in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, U.S. territories, Australia, Canada, and England. Currently, RISS serves more than **8,200** law enforcement and criminal justice agencies from all levels of government. More than **90,000** officers access RISS services and resources; this represents almost **one million criminal justice professionals** throughout the United States and other partnering countries.

Funding is requested to support RISS's efforts to respond to and serve the needs of criminal justice entities involved in combating terrorism and other multijurisdictional crimes. In addition to continuing its current services, RISS will utilize requested funds for the initiatives listed below. (Additional information on related programs is provided later in this document.)

- **Deconfliction:** Deploy RISSafe throughout the six RISS regions.
- **Gang Initiatives:** Develop and implement online gang-related training and minimum standards for such training, host a regional and/or national gang conference, conduct a gang survey, and connect gang intelligence systems to RISSNET.
- **Fusion Centers:** Work with fusion centers to identify their information sharing and communications needs; implement fusion center-specific enhancements; develop/provide resources, publications, and tools that support fusion center efforts; connect additional fusion centers to RISSNET and provide specialized technical support; conduct on-site assistance and training; and develop outreach and educational products.
- Assist in implementing portions of the *National Strategy for Information Sharing*.

- Expand the **Pawnshop Database** to all the RISS Centers, creating a nationwide system, and begin connecting existing disparate pawnshop databases.
- Increase the number of **Trusted Credential Partners** to provide seamless RISSNET access.
- **RISSNET Support:** Connect additional systems; establish a 24/7 help desk; expand bandwidth; update servers; increase Storage Area Network capacity; obtain additional network-monitoring equipment; upgrade hardware, operating systems, and RISSNET Portal framework software and licensing; and upgrade the RISSNET disaster recovery site.

## **Background**

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA), Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ), administers the RISS Program. The RISS Centers operate under the BJA *Funding and Administration Guidelines of the RISS Program* and the Criminal Intelligence Systems Operating Policies (28 CFR Part 23). Each of the six RISS Centers has developed operating policies and procedures that comply with the federal guidelines and regulations. In addition, RISS firmly recognizes the need to ensure that an individual's constitutional rights, civil liberties, civil rights, and privacy interests are protected throughout the intelligence process. RISS has adopted a privacy policy and strongly encourages its member agencies and all law enforcement agencies to voluntarily adopt appropriate and clearly defined privacy and security safeguards to manage and control collection, retention, and dissemination activities.

RISS is federally funded, but locally managed by its member agencies. RISS has served and continues to serve as a leader in the information sharing, intelligence, communications, investigative support, and technology arenas. RISS continues to successfully leverage proven relationships and partnerships. By connecting information sharing systems to the existing RISS infrastructure, rather than funding the build-out of new stand-alone systems, hundreds of millions of dollars can be saved and millions of data records can be easily and quickly accessed by users.

## **RISSNET—The RISS Secure Intranet**

One goal of RISS is to provide a capability for disparate systems to connect and communicate by leveraging proven technology. RISS operates RISSNET, which houses millions of pieces of data, acts as a secure platform for communications, and provides access to various state and federal intelligence systems. Almost 100 agency systems are connected or pending connection to RISSNET, including 32 High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTAs), 40 state agency systems, and 27 federal and other systems, such as the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives; Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Law Enforcement Online; FBI National Gang Intelligence Center; National Virtual Pointer System (NVPS); National White Collar Crime Center; and Nlets—The International Justice and Public Safety Network.

The RISSNET architecture is referenced and recommended in the *General Counterdrug Intelligence Plan* and is endorsed by the *National Criminal Intelligence Sharing Plan*. In addition, RISS is one of three systems promoted by the DOJ Law Enforcement Information Sharing Program (LEISP) Strategy. In addition, the *National Strategy for Information Sharing*

calls for information sharing solutions that could be accomplished through RISSNET, saving the high costs associated with creating new networks for users to access and retrieve information.

Through RISSNET, member agencies can securely exchange information and electronically access RISSNET resources, including the RISS criminal intelligence databases (RISSIntel), as well as various state, regional, federal, and specialized criminal justice systems; RISSafe; the RISSGang Program; the RISS Automated Trusted Information Exchange (ATIX); the RISS Investigative Leads Bulletin Board (RISSLeads); a data visualization tool (RISSLinks); the RISS Search Engine (RISSSearch); the RISS Center Websites; and secure e-mail.

**RISSafe** is an officer safety event deconfliction system that stores and maintains all planned law enforcement activities. Used in conjunction with a mapping system, upcoming events are posted and monitored for potentially dangerous conflicting law enforcement operations. If a conflict is identified, immediate notifications to the affected officers occur by a RISSafe Watch Center.

The **RISSGang Program** includes a criminal intelligence database, Web site, bulletin board, and gang-specific resources. The RISSGang database provides law enforcement agencies with access to gang suspects, organizations, weapons, locations, and vehicles, as well as visual imagery of gang members, tattoos, symbols, and graffiti. The Web site contains valuable information, research, and tools, including an anonymizing filter that removes the ability of target gang Web sites to identify officers.

The **RISS ATIX Program** allows nontraditional users of intelligence to connect securely and share critical information. ATIX community groups include local, county, state, and tribal levels of emergency management, law enforcement, and government, as well as public and private utilities, transportation, agriculture, chemical manufacturing, private security, environmental protection, banking, and hospitality industries. The RISS ATIX resources include the secure ATIX Web pages and library, the secure ATIX bulletin board, ATIXLive, and secure e-mail.

### **Investigative Support Programs**

RISS, however, is more than just a system. It has a full complement of investigative support services and resources that are provided to criminal justice member agencies. RISS not only offers secure communications, access to intelligence databases, and investigative resources but also provides services to enhance and improve the ability to detect, apprehend, and successfully prosecute individuals. These services, coupled with the power of RISSNET, set RISS apart from other information sharing programs. The following summarizes RISS's services.

**Information Sharing**—Operation of RISSNET and its various applications, databases, and investigative tools.

**Analysis**—Development of analytical products for investigative and prosecutorial use to meet member-agency needs, such as flowcharts, link-analysis charts, crime scene diagrams, and telephone toll analysis and financial analysis reports, as well as computer forensics analysis and video and audio enhancement services.

**Equipment Loans**—Pools of specialized investigative and surveillance equipment for loan to member agencies for use in support of multijurisdictional investigations.

**Confidential Funds**—Funds to purchase information, contraband, stolen property, and other items of an evidentiary nature or to provide for other investigative expenses related to multijurisdictional investigations.

**Training/Publications**—Meetings and conferences that build investigative expertise for member-agency personnel. Subject areas include anti-terrorism training, use of specialized equipment, officer safety information, and analytical techniques. In addition, the RISS Centers research, develop, and distribute numerous publications.

**Investigative Support**—The RISS Centers maintain a staff of intelligence technicians who support member agencies with a variety of investigative assistance, including database searches and batch uploads to RISSIntel.

**Field Services**—The RISS Centers maintain field staff and law enforcement coordinator units that conduct regular on-site visits to member agencies, as well as potential member agencies, to provide support, receive feedback and suggestions, and ensure that agencies are receiving the services they need from RISS to assist with their investigations.

## **Partnerships**

RISS continually refines and broadens its information sharing support and assistance by developing and enhancing services that fill information sharing gaps and meet the needs of its member agencies. RISS represents the core of collaboration and constantly seeks and fosters new and existing partnerships in order to maximize information sharing. RISS's partnerships and efforts have resulted in an unprecedented level of information and intelligence sharing. For example, RISS partnered with the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and HIDTA to create NVPS, which is an automated system that connects existing deconfliction pointer databases into one virtual pointer system. RISS also partnered with Project Safe Neighborhoods, which submits data to RISSIntel for the purpose of reducing gun violence. RISS also embraced the *Fusion Center Guidelines*—developed by DOJ, the Global Justice Information Sharing Initiative, and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security—and is working to support the tenets of the *National Strategy for Information Sharing*.

RISS also embarked on a number of nontraditional partnerships. For example, as a result of the Adam Walsh Child Protection and Safety Act, sex offender registry personnel agreed to utilize ATIX as their communications system. In addition, the National Football League utilized ATIX as its communications system for the 2008 Super Bowl and is considering ATIX as its permanent communications mechanism.

The success of RISS has been acknowledged and vigorously endorsed by the International Association of Chiefs of Police, as well as other national law enforcement groups, such as the National Sheriffs' Association and the National Fraternal Order of Police.

## **Results**

In FY2008, more than **3.4 million records** were available in RISSIntel. Inquiries to RISSIntel resulted in more than **288,000 hits**, providing law enforcement with critical information. RISS

delivered more than **27,000** analytical products and trained more than **63,000** criminal justice professionals. RISS's field staff conducted over **29,000** on-site visits to member agencies to train, support, and help integrate RISS services. This one-on-one support has resulted in trusted relationships and a network prized among its members. Member-agency investigations utilizing RISS services resulted in more than **5,000** arrests and **\$59 million in seizures of narcotics, property, and currency. These services are what make RISS a unique and valued program.**

### **Impact**

Without continued funding and support for RISS, law enforcement and public safety efforts will be severely hampered. Specifically, RISS and its users will experience the following:

- Delayed and/or a lack of new connectivity among agencies and users
- Decreased support and participation for LEISP and other Federated Identity projects
- Limited national coordination of RISSafe
- Inability to effectively support RISS ATIX and RISSGang
- Limited disaster recovery and redundancy of system applications and decreased security
- No upgrades or expansion of RISSNET
- Limited development of the RISSNET Portal and associated programs
- Elimination of current and planned information sharing projects
- Decreased RISS support services, resulting in limited analytical and investigative case support, no new specialized equipment, and fewer training opportunities for personnel

### **Conclusion**

**It is respectfully requested that Congress appropriate \$55 million for FY2010 to continue RISS's efforts in combating crime and terrorism.** For more than 30 years, RISS has operated as one of the nation's most important law enforcement intelligence sharing programs and continues to support efforts to expand and improve information sharing. RISS continually strives to foster interagency cooperation and provides a platform for local, state, federal, and tribal law enforcement agencies and public safety to work together in the effort to combat criminal elements across our nation.

Local and state law enforcement depend on RISS for information sharing, investigative support, and technical assistance and are increasingly competing for decreasing budget resources. It would be counterproductive to require local and state RISS members to self-fund match requirements, as well as to reduce the amount of BJA discretionary funding. Local and state agencies require more, not less, funding to fight the nation's crime problem. RISS cannot make up the decrease in funding that a match would cause, and it has no revenue source of its own. Cutting the RISS appropriation by requiring a match should not be imposed on the program.

For additional information on RISS, please visit [www.riss.net](http://www.riss.net). RISS is grateful for this opportunity to provide the committee with this testimony and appreciates the support this committee has continuously provided to the RISS Program.